



## **HISTORY of BIG HILL POND STATE PARK**

The history of Big Hill Pond includes tales and stories of long ago. The area known as Big Hill Pond came about by the construction of the Memphis to Charleston Railroad. The Big Hill came from the railroad cutting through the hill, the Pond was created by scooping out fall dirt for the levee's across the creek bottoms. Thus Big Hill and the Pond, so they called it Big Hill Pond. This was taking place in the early 1850's.

The earliest inhabitants of the area were Native Americans Woodland Period Indian sites (800 BC – 800 AD) can be found along the Tuscumbia and Hatchie Rivers. During historic times, Chickasaw Indians lived in the area until 1818 when they signed a treaty relinquishing their traditional homelands in Tennessee. The earliest non-Native European Americans to settle the area were white settlers some of whom brought slaves. They moved into the area in the 1820's and made their livelihood mainly from agricultural pursuits. Later, the railroad that runs through what is now the middle of the park, provided a center of focus for the community. The Memphis to Charleston Railroad built in 1853, was a major East-West artery for commerce and travel through the southern states. During the Civil-War, Union soldiers built and manned earthworks overlooking the Dismal Swamp Railroad trestle. Some of the men guarding this site were African American Union Soldiers. Several

conflicts between the armies took place near Chewalla and Pocahontas, as the Tuscumbia River served as a route inland from the Mississippi River and the Hatchie Rivers. The most noteworthy was the Battle of Davis Bridge, a fiercely contested battle fought by the Confederate Army of the West and the elements of the Union Army of West Tennessee. Fought in October of 1862, this contest with 18,000 combatants and roughly 1,000 Confederate and Union casualties, was the second largest battle fought in West Tennessee. The area in and around Big Hill Pond State Park was home to many farming families homesteads over the years, a fireplace foundation from one such home can still be seen in the playground area. Park formation was initiated in 1965 after a number of citizens requests, the state acknowledged the need for providing park services in the area. The Tennessee Game and Fish Commission of the time proposed to purchase approximately 12,000 acres for a combined park site and wildlife management area to be managed the Division of Parks and the Commission. The Commission later withdrew from the project. In 1973, the Department of Conservation reassessed the need for recreational opportunities across the state and designated Big Hill Pond as a State Park.